Title	Europe's old states and the new world order
Authors(s)	Todd, Jennifer
Publication date	2003-11-29
Publication information	Todd, Jennifer. "Europe's Old States and the New World Order." UCD Press, November 29, 2003.
Publisher	UCD Press
Item record/more information	http://hdl.handle.net/10197/2455

Chapter 12

Europe's old states and the new world order

Jennifer Todd

The earlier chapters of this book have provided detailed studies of particular territorial and institutional problems in Britain, France and Spain, contextualising these within the history and structure of the specific state and the European geopolitical context. Together they build a rich picture of the structures of, emergent tensions within and multiple forces impinging on the territorial management of each of the three states.

In this final chapter we look again at the questions raised in chapters 1 and 2 about the character of the new configuration of states and regions. We begin by asking if the very preconditions of centre–periphery conflict have changed in the new world order: have the changing powers of states or the changing character of peripheral identities undermined the conditions which led to conflict? We assess the degree to which the new elected regional institutions can provide a level of regional autonomy which defuses (or diffuses) older centre–periphery conflicts. We move on to the question of characterising the new conjuncture. Does it represent a convergence towards a new European regionalism or is it no more than an adaptation of the historical traditions and institutions of the individual states and regions to contemporary pressures? Should it be seen as 'strong' globalisation, where the states adopt common institutional innovations and are changed by common pressures, or 'weak' globalisation in which new elements are indigenised in older systems? Does it represent an introduction of new institutional elements, a new conjunctural set of relations, or a change in the structures of the *longue durée*? In the concluding section of the chapter, we return to the issue of continuity and change in the new world order.

State, power and centre–periphery conflict.

The history of state building was one of attaining a predominance of power and power-resources at the centre, at the expense of the peripheries which were gradually incorporated into the state (Poggi, 1978, pp. 60–74, 92–5; Tilly, 1975; Held et al., 1999, pp. 35–6). As the powerful state acted against the perceived interests of the peripheries, peripheral resentment fuelled centre–periphery conflict. New European and global developments have multiplied the loci of political power and given incentives for the state to act in co-operation with its peripheries (Held et al., 1999, pp. 85–6; Keating, 1998, pp. 72–8). Has this changed the very preconditions of centre–periphery conflict?

The states we have considered in this book have certainly lost some of their historic powers, although they have often lost them voluntarily, by forcing institutions and citizens to adopt a market-orientation (as in Britain in the 1980s), or by devolving powers or decentralising competences to the regions, or by accepting a higher European locus of political authority. It is in this sense that we may view globalisation 'as a politically rather than technologically induced phenomenon' (Weiss, 1998, p. 208). They have also kept significant powers, and the new regional institutions do not necessarily lessen central state powers or the capacity of the central state to shape regional policy. Cole (chapter 5, p. 88 above) points out that administrative deconcentration and decentralisation in France have not affected the powers of the state, while Mandeville (chapter 10) shows in the British case how increasing central state power in particular institutional arenas is quite compatible with – may indeed proceed through – processes of decentralisation and increasing local democracy. A centre-led homogenisation of policy is even compatible with devolution, for example through the effects of 'best value' or 'best practice' models (Mandeville, chapter 10; Todd). But if states have kept significant powers, these powers are increasingly exercised in a more dispersed policy-making environment, both in terms of functional dispersal and specialisation among the policy-making elite, and in terms of territorial dispersion. The policy-making arena has become multi-levelled and multi-located (Jessop, 1999; Held et al., 1998, pp. 85–6).

This policy dispersal and its effects on centre–periphery relations can be illustrated in the economic sphere. Economically, important state powers remain, in particular through co-operation and partnership with business and region to allow proactive economic development in the global economy (Weiss, 1998). It is this partnership between state, region and private sector in a European setting which is so well captured in the regionalist model which shows how the (still powerful) state facilitates new linkages for the (previously powerless) region (for example, see Cole, chapter 5 above). However such co-operation is by no means the norm: the British case is instructive in showing

how the state's macro-economic policy may instead unleash latent centre–periphery tensions (Nairn, 2000; see also Todd, pp. xx-xx above). Even where state-region partnership is institutionalised, the state's definition of timetables, targets and control of funding for regional planning are continuing sources of tension between the regions and state (see Saez, 2001 on France; Tomaney, 2000a, pp. 124–8, on England). Moreover as the expectations of regions rise, the lack of sufficient backing from the state becomes itself a cause of grievance; 1999–2000 saw an ongoing struggle by the Welsh executive to secure British government matching funding to allow it to draw on EU structural funding (Osmond, 2000, pp. 45–7). Where the relative powers of state and region to define economic priorities are already in dispute, as in Spain, the search for new regional linkages and funding can intensify centre–periphery tensions; the Spanish state, for example, has repeatedly challenged Basque industrial policy in the European Court of Justice (Loyer, 1999).

States also remain central in deciding on rates of taxation, standards of welfare, public expenditure and regional redistribution (see Crouch, 1999, on different European profiles in these respects; also Crozet et al., 2000, pp. 3–17). Priorities, values and interests on these issues can conflict between centre and periphery. Such conflicting interests on issues of public finance produce continued centre–periphery conflict in Spain, both in Catalonia, a net giver to the national economy, and in Andalusia and Extremadura, net receivers (Argelaguet, pp.00–00 above and Comas, pp. 46–7 above). Incipient conflict on regional financial allocation exists in the United Kingdomand may well increase (McLean, 2001). In the French case, by contrast, a more evenly balanced economy, and a much stronger statewide social security, health and welfare system and concern with workers' rights (e.g. the 35 hour week) give even the richest regions a continued interest in membership of the state. When this is combined with judicious redistributive regional aid – for example in the case of Brittany – it has helped de-radicalise emergent peripheral nationalist protest.

Other state–region conflicts over security, cultural, linguistic and educational policies, regional territorial boundaries, local and regional decision-making autonomy, constitutional issues and international relations (see also Bassetts, 1998) have been detailed in the chapters in this book. In each case where conflict exists, the state is usually powerful enough to assert its priorities over those of its regions, although struggle continues and long-term state success is by no means assured.

This overview suggests that even if the new policy-making environment offer the prospect of complementarity between state and region, it also generates a multiplicity of loci for conflict over resources focused in particular policy areas. Devolution is likely to increase the prevalence of these conflicts, not least because it gives institutions through which peripheral interests can

be clearly articulated and gives the region a greater capacity for asserting its interests. In some cases, these conflicts may be little more than institutional tensions or a jockeying for control of resources in particular policy areas. If this were all, it would represent a radical dispersal of conflict. Where centre–periphery relations were once focused in a zero-sum conflict between peripheral nationalism and central state sovereignty, conflict would now be dispersed into a range of different, unconnected policy areas, in each of which some form of compromise between region and state would in principle be possible. Such conflicts could continue in the normal course of political life even while both centre and region recognised the mutual benefits of their relationship. In this case the tensions between state and region would be of a different form than the centre–periphery dynamic (Saez, 2001). This benign scenario, however, is typical only of those regions which were already well integrated into the state before decentralisation or devolution.

In the historic region-nations, in contrast, the dynamic is importantly different. In these cases, the state retains sufficient powers to provoke new rounds of centre–periphery conflict where it already exists (the Basque Country, Catalonia, Corsica, Northern Ireland) or to regenerate it where it is latent (Scotland, Wales, other Spanish autonomous regions, Brittany, Alsace) (for example, Nairn, 2000; Ruane and Todd, 1996; Letamendia and Loughlin, 2000; chapters 3, 6, 9 above). The very reduction of central state powers at the same time as the granting of a level of regional autonomy permits once-subdued peripheries (Wales) to begin to assert themselves (see Osmond, 2001). In these cases, the new world order may have changed the form of centre–periphery conflict but it has not transcended it.

Peripheral regional and national identities and aims

Does the new world order transcend centre–periphery conflict in another way, by undermining peripheral opposition to the centre, and by changing the forms of peripheral identity and assertion? Globalisation, it has been argued, reconstitutes the importance of locality and territoriality; Robertson (1995) argues that it should properly be called 'glocalisation'. Moreover, the new territorially based identities are said to be different from the old; they are described as hybrid, nested, identities of choice not of fate, no longer connected with totalising nationalisms (Pieterse, 1995). By implication, these new regional identities are no longer oppositional to state identity, they are adapted to state–region complementarity, rather than centre–periphery conflict.

The studies in this book show that this view radically overestimates the extent of change. If such new regional identities exist, they are specific to those regions which had already been culturally integrated within the metropolis in

the state- and nation-building period. Take for instance the French admini-strative (functional) region of Midi-Pyrenees, which can serve as an example of trends typical in many other French and English regions. Notoriously a region without historic provenance – although it forms one part of the great historic region of Occitania, and includes strongly localistic micro-regions (Gers, Ariège) – its boundaries were defined as a matter of administrative convenience in 1964 (Marconis, 1994, pp. 132–5). Contemporary cultural and economic processes have generated a re-valuation of locality in this region – locality as *terroir*, as producer of food, cheese, wine, as tourist area. At times, they have produced a (re)invention of regional tradition in order to gain access to state and European resources (for the example the birth of the '*pays Cathare*', see Genieys and Smith, 1998). But for many within the region – increasingly many in those areas where prosperity has brought in-migration in the past few decades – the actual processes which define life-paths, career options and experience itself are general ones: investment or disinvestment in aerospatial industries, changing state policy on the school system, the value of the Euro, the attempt to equip children with a good grasp of the world language of English. The region and its localities are as much objects of consumption (ease of holidays on the Mediterranean or in the Pyrenees) as at the core of identity or at the limits of life-path. If this serves as a paradigmatic example of 'glocalisation', it is typical of only one type of European region.

In other regions, which have greater historical depth, the impact of new globalising processes is more ambiguous, leading to a partial and temporary convergence between new regionalist and traditional peripheral-oppositional identities. Through the 1990s, for example, Wales presented itself as a Europeanist region, wishing for regional autonomy not national sovereignty (even the President of Plaid Cymru in the early 1990s distanced himself from a concern with state sovereignty, see Thomas, 1991). Regionalist rhetoric let the Welsh express their cultural identity and national pride not as weak, failed nationalists but as forward-looking regionalists in a paradigmatic European region within the wider British state. Devolved institutions have, however, provided an alternative focus for national pride and have led to a resurgence of national identity, which is increasingly being differentiated from British identity instead of coexisting with it (Osmond, 2001). Alsace provides another example of the partial convergence of new regionalist and older peripheral cultural identities (see Vogler, 1994, esp. pp. 443–534, on Alsatian cultural identity). Political globalisation – in the form of European integration, the European Parliament and Council of Europe institutions in Strasbourg, the easing of movement and work across the French-German frontier, the emergence of Franco-German media (the television channel, *Arte*) – has reproduced, legitimated and strengthened a tradition of Alsatian regionalism and cultural particularism.[1] From being a politically and culturally problematic

mixture of elements, its hybridity a cause of shame under both German and French rule, Alsatian regionalism has become a paradigm of Europeanism, its very specificity in the varied architecture of Strasbourg now the symbol of European modernity (Klein et al, 1996). This symbolic convergence, however, elides the tensions between Alsatian regional interests, and the new French and European institutions, which have been expressed, *inter alia*, in a strong extreme right vote.[2]

In the case of the strong historic region-nations, global developments and emergent European opportunities, far from undoing national oppositions have positively strengthened peripheral nationalist feeling. The new European environment provides pathways for old peripheral nationalisms to progress, to find allies, to increase their economic strength and political resources. Global re-evaluations of locality are put to nationalist uses: the Olympic games of 1982 held in Barcelona provided the opportunity to project the Catalan region-nation on the world stage (Graham and Sánchez, 1995; Morgan, 2000, pp. 63–5; Hargreaves, 2000); the architectural regeneration of Bilbao, epitomised in the Guggenheim Museum, has national and nationalist, not just economic, motivations. Peripheral nationalisms adopt regionalist and pluralist discourse in order to gain allies in a European and US arena (Ruane and Todd, pp. 232–3 above). Catalonia's success in utilising EU networks and linkages is welcomed, not simply for its economic worth, but also because it lessens the linkages with the Castilian centre (Bassetts, 1998). Ideologically too, both Catalan and Scottish nationalists and Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland, together with the French peripheral nationalist parties use their Europeanism as a sign of their progressive, modernising and pluralist projects against the backward centrism and sovereigntism of respectively the Spanish, British and French states. Global opportunities and resources thus encourage nationalist assertion.

In these cases, the devolution of powers to the peripheral nation increases its capacity for nation building and national mobilisation. Political autonomy has, for example, massively increased the relative resources of Catalonia within Spain; economic development has gone hand in hand with cultural nationalism and the predominance of the Catalan language in public life in the region (Keating, 2001b, pp. 165–77; Llobera, 1996). Catalonia's economic success and Barcelona's prestige as a world city give the Catalan autonomous government extra clout in negotiations with the centre, and the resources for a major publishing, translating and broadcasting industry, allowing all education (including third level) in the region to be through Catalan. The increasing prominence of Catalan identity has reproduced the opposition between Catalan nationalism and the powers of the Castilian state (Argelaguet, pp. 112–3 above). Equally the Basques have used their autonomous government to build the sense of and the resources of the distinctive Basque nation

Even where there is no explicit attempt at nation building, the devolved political institutions may serve as a focus for national identity and loyalty; in Scotland and Wales, for example Scottish and Welsh identities have become stronger since devolution.

The case studies in this book show, however, that if national identities and solidarity have been strengthened by the new institutions, nationalism in many of the historic regions has also taken a newly gradualist path, moderating its short-term aims and strategies and accepting a coexistence (at least temporary) with the state. This has been the case in Northern Ireland where once-violent extreme nationalist groups have renounced violence and have been brought into a moderate interim settlement. It is the case in Catalonia, where a virtuous circle has been instituted between gradually increasing powers and gradualist nationalist demands (Keating, 2001b, pp. 51–65). It appeared to be the case in Corsica before the Matignon process came to a halt. This new gradualism is most marked where institutions are put in place which allow nationalist and regionalist aims to dovetail, so that a range of constituencies – from the non-nationalist, through the liberal nationalist to the classic nationalist – can see benefits in the prospects of relatively limited (but indefinitely expandable) regional autonomy and internal reform. Keating (2001a, pp. 137–8) sees this 'taming' and 'moderation' of nationalism as produced in important part by the European context. We have argued here that while the EU has *fostered* the institutions within which nationalism has become more moderate, it has not *provided* them: both in Britain and Spain, new institutional frameworks have had to be created. Moreover those frameworks work only as they give nationalists a real opportunity of gradualist progress towards their goals. Basque nationalists have shown less evidence of gradualism in large part because such progress was not visible: their goals (to reunify territories presently in Spain and France, and to incorporate the divided territory of Navarre) are so ambitious that they are not easily open to gradualist progress; moreover Spanish governments have been consistently less attentive to their interests and less willing to facilitate increasing competences for the autonomous Basque government than they have in the case of Catalonia where the parties have held pivotal positions in Spanish national politics (Comas, p. 57 above).

Even where peripheral nationalisms appear to have deradicalised, therefore, this should not be seen as signalling an imminent demise of nationalism or emerging post-nationalism or regionalism. The data presented in chapters 6 and 7 suggest, on the contrary, that national identities and nationalist long-term aims remain strong. The deradicalisation may rather suggest an interim postponement of long-term goals until the present direction and effect of the new institutional context becomes clear.

The new institutions of regional self-government and levels of regional autonomy

We have argued that the new institutional configurations described in this book promise to moderate the demands of peripheral nationalists only to the extent that they partially satisfy them. At least for the historic region-nations, the institutions of regional self-government give a stable political framework only if they also give a sufficient level of regional autonomy to satisfy national interests, i.e. to allow the region-nation to determine its own future in the new interdependent European environment. Keating (2001a) describes this as a post-sovereigntist configuration, where regions can bypass the state rather than conflict with it. But how much autonomy do the regional institutions of Britain, France and Spain actually give to the regions? Is it enough to (partially) satisfy nationalist interests?

We may define *autonomy* in terms of the region's ability to define its own projects and to fulfil them. In practical political terms, autonomy is functionally equivalent to independence, not formally or constitutionally, but in terms of freedom of action and the real cultural and political benefits that it can bring.[3] Autonomy may be seen as a form of positive, democratic freedom which requires both economic and political resources and a cultural capacity for self-determination (see Macpherson, 1973, pp. 104–16). Autonomy in this sense is a product not of any particular regional resource or set of resources, but of the *value* of these resources as defined by the state context and region-state relationship. Autonomy is important because it is a way in which the core nationalist demand (for self-determination, for an ability to determine the collective destiny) can be satisfied short of separatism or secession. Note also that autonomy may usefully be conceived as a process, where initial resources are effectively used to attain others and the range of regional powers thus increased.

The level of regional autonomy – thus defined – varies enormously in the regions considered in this book. Autonomy is a product of the particular configuration and relations of institutions, laws, political, cultural and economic resources in region and state; in assessing relative levels of autonomy, therefore, we begin by looking each of the 'building blocks' which together make it up. (For a thorough overview with a different end-in-view, see Keating, 1998, chapter 5).

Constitutional status

In terms of constitutional status, all seventeen Spanish autonomous communities (and no British or French regions) have constitutional guarantees of autonomy (in the constitution and in their specific organic laws) which must be respected by the central state. Within Spain, those regions with the status

of 'historic nationalities' (particularly Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia, see Comas, pp.41–2 above), have greatest constitutional protection. In Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, a division of powers between regional government and central state has been agreed but without any formal derogation from the absolute sovereignty of the British state which thus retains the legal right to legislate for or overrule the regional assembly, although it has agreed in normal circumstances not to exercise this right. This constitutional status, however, is disputed both in Scotland (MacCormick, 2000) and in Northern Ireland (Ruane and Todd, pp. 00–00 above).

Formal powers

In terms of formal powers, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and all seventeen Spanish autonomous communities possess both legislative and administrative powers. Wales has currently only secondary legislative powers and administrative powers. Neither the Greater London Authority nor the French regions have legislative powers (although Corsica stood to gain such powers had the Matignon process succeeded). The main powers of the English and French regions – even after the projected reforms in each state – include the capacity for strategic planning for the region. Strategic planning powers are important for autonomy because they stand to benefit the region in terms of material development and allow choice about the direction of this development; legislative powers are central in determining the form of life in the region, and thus at the core of autonomy and democratic self-determination.

Competences

In terms of the range of competences granted to elected regional assemblies, the British historic regions have by far the highest powers, with practically all internal regional affairs devolved to Scotland, all with the exception of security devolved to Northern Ireland (although this may be devolved later) and an equal range of executive functions given to the Welsh Assembly. Next come the Spanish autonomous regions, which share competences on some domestic matters with Madrid, and which are internally ranked. Catalonia and the Basque Country have the highest range of competences within Spain, including policing, and Catalonia has been more successful than the Basque Country in negotiating for itself additional specific competences. If the Matignon process had been successful, Corsican competences would have been somewhat less than the Spanish regions, but considerably more than the other French regions. In the present decentralisation proposals of the Raffarin administration, a somewhat broader set of administrative competences (ranging from strategic economic planning to control of major infrastructural development to professional education and training) is proposed for the French regions, with the possibility of asymmetrical powers for different regions; the exact

range of competences is to be negotiated with each region in the process of restructuration.

Specifically in relation to international action, Northern Ireland, with its access to the North–South Council and through it to the EU, has the widest formal range of competences. Catalonia, with high informal influence on Spanish policy within the EU, may be substantively the highest. Catalonia, the Basque Country, Galicia, Scotland and Wales are all straining for greater freedom of international action (Bassetts, 1998).

Budget

In terms of per-capita expenditure by the regional assembly, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are significantly ahead even of the biggest-spending Spanish regions, Catalonia and the Basque Country. For example, the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish executives each have an annual budget of over £3,000 sterling per capita.[4] In contrast, the Catalan government had a budget of €2,034 per capita for 2002 (Argelaguet, p. 108, above), which, given the exchange rate, is just over half of the Welsh budget. This, however, is significantly higher than London's budget (in 1999 about £500 sterling – less than €1,000 – per capita (Tomaney, 2000b)), followed in turn by the French and English regions whose budgets are currently very small.[5] In terms of direct regional access to tax income, however, the rank ordering is quite different. Only the Basque Country and Navarre raise their own taxes, although in recent years Catalonia and the other Spanish regions have been granted increased tax-raising powers (see Comas, pp. 46–7 and Argelaguet, p. 118 above), Scotland has minor tax varying powers, followed by Wales, Northern Ireland, London and the French and English regions all of whose budget is provided from the centre.

The actual budget, however, is no measure of autonomy which must rather be seen in terms of the political *value* of its financial resources in terms of the region's freedom of action. So, for example, the comparatively high Welsh budget is to be spent largely on administering policies decided in London, with relatively little freedom of action (but some, see Marinetto, 2001), and thus it is not a good measure of Wales's degree of autonomy.[6]

Civil service and employees per capita

In terms of numbers of regional civil servants per capita, the Spanish regions of Catalonia and the Basque Country, together with Northern Ireland, form the top rank, followed by Wales and Scotland and the other Spanish regions.[7] Catalonia and the Basque country have their own regional civil service, while (with the exception of Northern Ireland) there is a unified civil service for the United Kingdom, with only responsibility for junior appointments devolved to the regions. Within this, informally it is said that the Scottish civil service

has more habits of independence with respect to Whitehall than does the Welsh.[8] The Northern Ireland Assembly has responsibility for the Northern Ireland Civil Service (but not the Northern Ireland Office, which remains answerable to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland). The NICS had developed a definite autonomy with respect to Whitehall during the first period of devolution, 1921–72 (see Oliver, 1978), but central direction was strongly asserted during the period of direct rule, from 1972 until 1998. The result has been a certain civil service nervousness of (being seen to make) politically contentious (i.e. non-mainland) decisions: how far this conservatism will survive devolution, if indeed devolution itself survives, is as yet unclear.

Institutional and cultural distinctiveness

Catalonia, Northern Ireland and the Basque Country have distinct party systems, dominated, in the former two cases, by intra-nationalist competition, while in the Basque Country a state-wide party forms the main opposition. Scotland, Wales, most of the other Spanish autonomous communities and about a third of the French regions have regionally distinct parties, although the governing party is the regional branch of one of the state-wide parties (see Comas, pp. 47–9; Appendices A: 3, B: 3; C: 3). In Scotland, Wales and Galicia, a nationalist party is the main opposition party. In France, the peripheral parties are electorally very weak: only in Savoy and Corsica do they have representatives in the regional assembly, and only in Corsica do they win a significant percentage of the vote. Scotland, Catalonia and the Basque Country have distinct judicial systems. Catalonia, the Basque Country, Scotland and Northern Ireland have distinct police forces (indeed there is a sense in which each police force in the United Kingdom is distinct in organisation and authority structure, see Mandeville, pp. 191–5). Only in the case of Scotland, however, is internal security solely under the control of the Scottish Parliament; in the Basque Country and Catalonia, responsibility is shared with the central government, and in Northern Ireland security is a reserved matter for the central government which may be transferred to Northern Ireland at a later date.

Catalonia, the Basque Country, Galicia, Corsica and Wales have distinctive languages which form a core part of the educational system (Lefevre, 2002; Argelaguet, pp. 108, 119; Montes, pp. 175–6; Henderson, 1996). In other regions such as Northern Ireland, Alsace, Brittany, the French Basque Country, Scotland, and some other French regions, the distinctive language is spoken by a relatively small minority, and optional teaching of the regional language is available within the educational system (Loyer, 2002; Vogler, 1994; O'Reilly, 1999). In terms of the political will and capacity to institutionalise in the educational system the distinctive regional culture, Catalonia ranks highest, followed by the Basques, Welsh and Corsicans, followed by

Galicia and the divided but intensely solidaristic blocs in Northern Ireland; Scotland which already had a distinctive educational structure within the United Kingdom, is not at present culturally assertive.

Regional power (the capacity to get central government to do what it would not otherwise do)

Both the Scots and Catalans exert considerable influence on, respectively, the British and Spanish governments. They exemplify two quite different modes of influence. In Catalonia, the parties develop their policies independently and then attempt to influence the statewide parties either within a confederal party (where PSC attempts to influence PSOE policy) or by supporting minority or weak governments in the Spanish Congress of Deputies (as CiU has done for the last decade). In Scotland, in contrast, the Labour party which has dominated Scottish politics since 1945, and which now leads the Scottish executive, is a subsection of the British Labour Party currently in power at Westminster (Hassan, 2002). Scottish Labour politicians have a high profile role in the British government, giving them an input into central decision making there.[9] This influence, however, is mutual – the centre also restricts Scottish Labour policy formation. The Welsh, Bretons and Andalusians, like Scottish Labour, also have had influence on central government policies through their participation in one of the main national parties (Genieys, 1997a; Cole, pp. 95–6 above). Nationalists in the Basque Country and the Ulster Unionist Party in Northern Ireland, like CiU in Catalonia, have sought to influence central decision-making through their role in supporting minority governments or manipulating the balance of power in the central parliament.

Levels of autonomy

There are radically varying levels of autonomy among the regions discussed in this book. The French regions as yet have relatively little autonomy; even those which have sufficiently strong identity and solidarity to define distinctive projects have been granted relatively little capacity to realise them. The historic region-nations of Britain and Spain have higher levels of autonomy, but within very different institutional and constitutional frames. It is thus useful to compare the levels of autonomy of Scotland (with the greatest range of competences within Britain) and Catalonia (with one of the greatest ranges of competences within Spain). In terms of formal competences it appears that Scotland wins in the comparison since from the outset it was granted competence over all internal domestic affairs, while Catalonia, despite having steadily increased its range of competence since 1978, still shares competence on some domestic affairs with the Spanish government. Equally, the Scottish budget is significantly higher than the Catalan, although the Catalan government now has the power to take directly a tranche of the tax raised on its territory.

However, despite lesser competences and finances, Catalonia has enacted very distinctive policies in a Spanish context, particularly but not exclusively in the realm of education and language. In contrast, the Scottish parliament has tended to echo much of Westminster legislation (see chapter 4), being accused of a 'poverty of ambition' in its policy programme.[10] This has led to the widespread view that devolution has not led to 'the establishment of a Scottish political system, different in its priorities, processes and culture from Westminster' (Hassan and Warhurst, 2001, p. 213; chapter 4, figure 1, p. 74 shows that similar judgements are widespread among the Scottish public).

The difference is in part a product of the party systems. The distinct Catalan party system allows policies to be articulated and developed independently, purely in terms of a Catalan electoral dynamic. In Scotland, on the other hand, Scottish Labour's relation with the wider Labour Party gives the centre an influence on the formation of policy in the Scottish Labour Party. If Catalonia, in this sense, is paradigmatically autonomous, Scotland is only partly so, lacking some of the institutional resources to define its own projects and policy direction. It might be argued that the fact of a separate and thriving Catalan language (as opposed to the very weak status of Scots Gaelic) allows more distinctive educational and cultural policies to be pursued in Catalonia than in Scotland. However, if we see Catalonia's cultural policies as determined not solely by a linguistic programme but more generally by an integrationist, nation-building programme with the aim of creating a distinctive society, a comparison with Scotland becomes possible. Much less nation building has taken place to date by the Scottish parliament, whose main distinctive legislative achievements have been in the realm of health and educational funding, rather than cultural policies or major restructuring of its institutions. In terms of ability to define distinctive projects and achieve them, therefore, Catalonia appears at present to enjoy greater autonomy than Scotland, despite lesser powers.

Are present levels of autonomy sufficient to satisfy nationalists? In the sense that only a minority in Catalonia, the Basque Country, Wales or Scotland demand independence, the answer is clearly yes (Keating, 2001a, pp. 57–83). In the sense that there is a majority demand for greater powers in these same region-nations (Argelaguet, p.114 above; Todd, pp.73–4 above), the answer is no. There is a dynamic of autonomy, a desire for more. Will this dynamic of autonomy destabilise the state, leading eventually to separation of the stronger regions from their states? That is much less clear. In part, the desire for more powers is simply a dispersed set of demands – for greater independence of finances, for legislative powers for Wales, for different arrangements with the EU. Each such demand is in principle satisfiable without major constitutional change or state instability. Even if this should increase the level of autonomy, this does not necessarily lead to a centrifugal

tendency of increasing divergence between parts of the state. In Britain, as we
have seen (chapters 4, 10 above), there are strong integrationist tendencies at
the level of policy and institutional structure, which qualify and moderate
regional assertion and ensure that the devolved legislatures have largely
repeated Westminster legislation. In Spain, where integrating tendencies are
weakest, the dynamic of devolution is also strongest. In France, where institu-
tional and policy integration is strongest, even much stronger decentralisation
than exists at present, or devolution of powers such as those proposed for
Corsica, should not radically affect state-wide integration.

In some cases, however, the dynamic of devolution has destabilising
potential. The demand for more powers for the regional assemblies is not
simply a desire for piecemeal increases in the range of competences. In
Catalonia and the Basque Country, as also in Corsica, there is more: a demand
for recognition of the right to self-determination, and for recognition of the
national status of the region (Comas, pp. 41, 55–6; Argelaguet, pp. 104, 113;
Charlet, p. 167). In Northern Ireland, Irish nationalists too want recognition
of Irish self-determination (Ruane and Todd, pp. 124, 127–8). In Scotland,
the situation is more ambiguous. There is a strong and widespread view that
British sovereignty in Scotland is limited sovereignty, and this view goes
against the dominant British state view that the absolute sovereignty of the
Crown in Parliament is unaffected by the devolution of powers to Scotland
(MacCormick, 2000). Yet this 'Scottish anomaly' has existed not just for
decades but for centuries, with the differing interpretations of the constitution
coexisting without overt conflict; if the issue continues to be bypassed, the
dynamic of devolution in Scotland is quite consistent with state stability.
However, if the constitutional issues are highlighted and politicised, as they
are in Catalonia, the Basque Country, Northern Ireland and Corsica, they are
not open to easy compromise. The demands of the peripheral nations do not
require that the state accept the separation of part of its territory in the
immediate or even the long term; they do demand of the state a willingness *in
principle* to allow independence for the region, even if *in practice* agreement
on the region's continued association within the state (within for example a
formal or informal federacy) is reached. These regional demands may not
have increased with devolution; their urgency may be lessened when regions
already enjoy a relatively high amount of autonomy; but they are not satisfied
simply by devolution. Would they be satisfied by a fully federal or confederal
system where continued association between the constituent parts was freely
chosen? Perhaps, but this is by no means certain, which is why the states are
unwilling lightly to give such constitutional recognition.

The new conjuncture

The individual chapters in this book have traced a process of change in state structures and in centre–periphery relations. How far is there a convergence in the process of change, as predicted by theories of (strong) globalisation? Have the states imported a common set of institutional innovations? Or have new 'imported' institutional elements been incorporated within existing social systems and traditional modes of understanding, constituting merely a 'weak' form of globalisation? To put the question in a different theoretical perspective, just how strong is historical path dependence? And if historical tradition *conditions*, rather than *determines*, change, what is the balance between old and new in the new configurations? Is change a matter of new elements and events, of a new conjuncture, or of change in the long-term structures of the states and regions?

First, consider that in each of the cases studied, we encountered the intersection of a number of systemic processes, some state-wide, some within the peripheral regions, some European in scope, some specific to particular institutional areas such as policing. The result is a multiple reterritorialisation of politics. Institutional spheres subject to functional imperatives such as policing are, in such otherwise diverse states as Britain and France, concentrating resources on and differentiating policies and procedures in respect to particular inner city localities. What has changed is not the importance of territory but the dispersal of territorially based power and decision making. There is no longer one totalising structure of politics, be it central control or centre–periphery conflict (Held et al., 1999, pp. 80–1, 85–6). Where regional governance has been introduced, regional powers (as well as demands) are typically asymmetric. Changes in each institutional sphere and territorial area may be provoked by different processes and follow different paths. This marks a significant change in the European state system.

Within each state, this creates a much more complex socio-political system than before, one composed of multiple and multi-located sub-systems, with different internal logics, mutually intersecting and impinging one on another. Yet these subsystems are not mutually independent: overall policy integration exists despite devolution (Mandeville, chapter 10 above); processes in one institutional area (policing) are affected by territorial conflict and by the overall form of the state (Montes, chapter 9 above; Mandeville, chapter 10 above; Picard, chapter 11 above). A level of systemic unity still exists in our case studies, and in each case it is centred on the state. The state remains the active unifier and inter-relater of the different systems and sub-systems. This is partially a rhetorical task, whereby state elites create a discourse that unifies and a rationale which shows the place of each part in a changing national system. But it is also, as we have seen, a product of state policies and interventions.

The Spanish state has intervened on a number of occasions since 1978 to shape the political-territorial dynamic: most particularly in its creation between 1981 and 1983 of 17 autonomous communities rather than simply four (see Comas, p. 49; Argelaguet, p. 106). The contemporary British state combines regional and local devolution with an assertion of general guidelines throughout the state – for example 'best value' – which ensure a high level of policy convergence and strong informal pressures and financial incentives to minimise policy divergence. The French state remains even more deeply involved in all aspects of socio-political life, ensuring that the many exceptions to the homogeneity of the French state as defined by the 1958 constitution are not generalised too far and do not disrupt the basic constitutional pattern (Cole, chapter 5; Picard, chapter 11).

In effect, a multiplicity of different sub-systems are interrelated within the one state, in a functioning constitutional-territorial model, whose diverse internal parts are loosely integrated in a considerably more open societal system than before. This is a constantly constructed and reconstructed system, one with existent and emergent tensions, responsive to pressures from its various parts, whose actual functioning may well not correspond to its official ideology (Mardeville, chapter 10). It is constantly totalised and retotalised by government actions and elite rhetoric, but change is mediated by historical tradition, both in justifications and legitimations, and in the habits of state-craft which, as we saw in Britain and France, are put to work on new problems.

Constant pressures and conflicts disrupt the functioning equilibrium and put in question the legitimating narratives. New elements are regularly incorporated into older structures and systems. There are 'importations' of elements and institutional frameworks which have worked well elsewhere. In Northern Ireland, the disaggregation of state functions in the Good Friday Agreement and their sharing between different authorities – including the Irish state – owes much to notions and practices of shared sovereignty in the European Union. In France, the present decentralisation reforms introduce into the French system factors of asymmetry ('experimentation') and openendedness (openness to negotiation) which have been central to the successful functioning of the Spanish and British systems.

If new elements are introduced, however, their form is not identical from one state to another. Their rhetorical and practical totalisation by the state incorporates them within a guiding model of constitutional-territorial management which allows exceptions while defining a system with a certain coherence and character-in-dominance. That character-in-dominance in all three of the states considered here is heavily influenced by historical tradition: French republican centralism, the British dual polity, the Spanish constitution of 1978. But the new elements do not leave the system unchanged. A historical determinist approach accurately picks up on the tendency to assimilate the

new within existing understandings and practices. It ignores the fact that the older system can creak under the strain. In Britain, the state-led assimilation of devolved regional powers in the framework of the dual polity has desta-bilised the dual polity, and opened it to different possible futures (see Todd, chapter 7). In France, the republican system is more rigid. Nonetheless, the problems with the present French system are clear (not least the problems of France's internal peripheries where North African immigration has been concentrated) and the centralist republican model can no longer provide the answers. Moreover the germs of a new configuration exist in regional pro-activity, regional culture, the beginnings of bilingual education, proximity policing, all with public approval and public belief that French unity is consistent with regional specificities.

Radical change does take place and alters the historical pattern. The 1978 Spanish constitution was a radical innovation, taking account of the historical legacies of class, religious and centre–periphery divisions and creating a new consensual democratic framework. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 is a radical alteration in the status and structuration of Northern Ireland (see Ruane and Todd 2003 forthcoming). Both of these examples, while influenced by international models, were specific transformations designed to resolve specific historically given problems. Each was state led, in co-operation and negotiation with all other significant actors. They were new totalisations of the intersecting and conflicting parts, emphasising new elements of the pattern, changing the 'mainframe'. It is for this reason that, while there are clear common problems in the cases we have discussed in this book and common imperatives towards further change, there has been relatively little convergence. If there is a move-ment towards regional autonomy in each of the three states, the extent and the meaning of regional autonomy varies within each state and between the states, as do the nodes of power and of conflict-management within each system. In each case, transformation of the old (historically specific) state system has led to a new (specific) state system, not to a common system; this is neither weak nor strong but reflexive and transformative globalisation (chapter 1, pp. 14–15 above). Should a transformation of French centralism occur, it will surely work with the specificities of the system, not least the depth of the state in the institutional sphere (see Cole, chapter 5); this need not involve the cataclysms predicted by republican centrists.[11]

Change occurs within a framework given by the deeper structures of these old states. Britain's legacy of informal empire and dual polity remain crucial in its relations with Ireland and with its internal peripheries (Ruane, pp. 26–28 above; Ruane and Todd, 1996, chapters 8, 10). The long historical weakness of the Spanish centre and its legacy of political but not social, economic or cultural integration remain crucial factors in explaining the more centrifugal dynamic of devolution in Spain than in Britain. France's reliance on a

complex web of state-centred institutions to give unity and identity to a diverse population means that any state recognition of community-centred institutions (for example, giving political voice to the historic region-nations) is kept within strict bounds. But some deep structures are changing. In Catalonia, the Basque Country, Scotland, Wales and many of the French regions (but not in Northern Ireland where ethno-religious differentiation remains crucial), ethnicity is becoming less important than political in defining the region-nation: Catalan nation building precisely involves assimilating very large numbers of recent Spanish immigrants (Argelaguet, pp. 00–00); the Scottish motivation for devolution is strongly motivated by a desire for regional democracy (Keating, 2001b, pp. 63, 262).

If, at the European level, there is the beginning of a reversal of the long historical process of state building and a reterritorialising of politics, what is the status of centre–periphery conflict in the new order? The studies in this book show that in Britain, France and Spain, the sovereign state reproduces conflict with the peripheries in the very process of retotalising an ever more complex and open system. We are not – or not yet – in a post-sovereigntist age. In each of the cases, the state retains enough powers to block peripheral interests and generate conflict, although the range of issue-areas in which it has such powers has now decreased. There are now more opportunities for regions to bypass the state than before, but, where they exist (and they are unevenly distributed) they are double-edged in their effects, often increasing the peripheral region's interest in autonomy. In short, the centre– periphery dynamic continues to be reproduced in at least parts of the old European states. If conflict is reproduced, however, these new more open state systems function only by more negotiated interaction with and fuller participation by the key actors than before: regions have to be consulted, centre–periphery tensions must be politically mediated if conflict is to be precluded. That is a democratic advance.

Conclusion

The comparisons in this book have centred on the political systems of Britain, France and Spain. These case studies, despite historical parallels and com-monalities, have revealed little convergence in responses to the common problems of the new world order. Where common institutional models are taken, or institutional innovations imported, the meanings of these institu-tional innovations differ from one state (and often also one region) to another. Again and again, it is clear that comparative research on regionalism, peripheral nationalism, changing models of territorial management, require models which grasp the specific historical logics of the given states, the cross-cutting logics
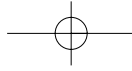
of particular institutional areas, the logic whereby oppositional interests and identities are generated within the regions and the multi-levelled tensions and conflicts which result. If states totalise and retotalise their dispersed subsystems, the logic by which they perform this unifying task needs to be deciphered. And the contradictions and divergences within this process, and between the state's and the regions' understandings of it, must be grasped if we are to identify emergent tensions and explain the resolutions which the states and the regions (provisionally at least) find for the problems that they face. Institutionalism – whether historical institutionalism or a focus on institutional innovation for common regional problems – has to be constantly qualified by a sense of the wider meanings and deeper structures in which institutions are inserted. Change – which in many respects is radical in the contemporary period – must be situated in the *longue durée* if we are to understand its significance. Post-national ideas and post-sovereigntist institutions are beginning to emerge in the contemporary period, but they are far from dominant in the different political systems studied here. If their potential is to be assessed, or their growth encouraged, this requires an identification of the continuities within which they exist as well as the change which they represent.